

We must start addressing the problems facing our Great Lakes. On February 16, 2006, I, along with Congressman Emanuel and Congressman Reynolds, introduced H.R. 4771, the Great Lakes Invasive Species Control Act. This legislation would close a major loophole in current ballast water law. Currently, ships carrying ballast water must undergo ballast water exchange to flush out invasive species before entering the Great Lakes from another port. However, approximately 90% of these ships have ballast tanks, but no ballast water on board. These “NOBOBs” are not subject to the same ballast water exchange laws. Invasive species often survive in the few gallons of water and sediment at the bottom of these tanks. Once carried into the Great Lakes, the contamination begins.

I was proud to receive a letter from the Great Lakes Fishery Commission on February 28th endorsing this bill as an important and integral step in ensuring that ALL ships, including NOBOBs, must address the threat of invasive species before entering Great Lakes waters. This bill fulfills one of the top near-term goals of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, a coalition of local, state, and federal interests, in government, non-profit, and business arenas. It is an important start. However, I see it only as a first step in moving towards better protection and restoration of one of our most important national treasures, the Great Lakes. (See letter [here](#))